

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its resource management plans (RMP), which guide management of BLM-administered lands. This RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes alternatives for the future management of public lands and resources the BLM administers in South Dakota. The South Dakota RMP revision is being administered by the BLM South Dakota Field Office (SDFO).

The BLM South Dakota Proposed Plan which is Alternative D (Proposed Action) provides a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in the most valuable habitat. Land use allocations in the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA), while minimizing disturbance in General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs). In addition to establishing protective land use allocations, the Proposed Plan would implement a suite of management tools, such as disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives and monitoring, mitigation approaches, adaptive management triggers and responses, and other protective measures throughout the range. These overlapping and reinforcing conservation measures will work in concert to improve and restore GRSG habitat condition and provide consistency in how the BLM will manage activities in GRSG habitat in the planning area.

Rationale and Relationship to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

The South Dakota RMP addresses the March 2010 US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) (GRSG) as Threatened or Endangered (75 Federal Register 13910, March 23, 2010). In that finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered species. A “warranted, but precluded” determination is one of three results that may occur after a petition is filed by the public to list a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This finding indicates that immediate publication of a proposed rule to list the species is precluded by higher-priority listing proposals; that is, a species should be listed based on the available science, but listing other species takes priority because they are more in need of protection.

The USFWS reviewed the status of and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. Of the five listing factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, “the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the GRSG,” and Factor D, “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms,” posed “a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future” (75 Federal Register 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM as conservation measures in RMPs.

The South Dakota RMP is one of the 15 land use plan (LUP) revisions and amendments and EISs being prepared by the BLM as part of the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011).¹ These documents provide a set of management alternatives focused on specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG (see Figure ES-1, Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Boundaries).

Science-based decision making and collaboration with state and local partners are fundamental to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The 15 GRSG RMP/EISs address threats to GRSG identified by state fish and wildlife agencies, the BLM National Technical Team, and the USFWS in the context of its listing decision and the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report. The COT report was prepared by wildlife biologists from state and federal agencies and provides a blueprint for the overall conservation approach set forth in the BLM GRSG LUP/EISs (USFWS 2013).² Where consistent with conservation objectives, the GRSG LUP/EISs adopt unique state and stakeholder developed approaches and priorities. Additional science-based reviews by the US Geological Survey and related scientific literature provided further guidance on specific issues that arose in developing the final BLM and Forest Service GRSG LUP/EISs. In addition, regular meetings with the Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force provided additional opportunities for coordination with member states.³

Figure ES-1



Description of the Planning Area and Habitat Management Areas

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM will make decisions during this planning effort. The planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction. The South Dakota RMP planning area covers the entire state of South Dakota, which is approximately 49.3 million acres of federal, state, and private lands and Native American reservations in 37 counties. Of the total area, approximately 274,000 acres are BLM-administered surface lands and 1.7 million acres are federal mineral estate in 37 counties. The majority of BLM-administered lands are highly intermingled with private, state, and National Forest System lands. Over 99 percent of the BLM-administered surface and mineral estate in South Dakota is located in the western part of the state. Refer to Chapter 1, for more details.

While the planning area consists of all lands regardless of ownership, decisions resulting from the South Dakota RMP/EIS would apply only to BLM-administered lands, including surface and split-estate lands with BLM-administered subsurface mineral rights. Chapter 3, Affected Environment, describes the current resource and resource use conditions in the planning area.

As part of the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy, GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands in the decision area consists of lands allocated as PHMA and GHMA (Figure ES-2, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas—South Dakota RMP/EIS, and Table ES-1 Habitat Management Areas in the South Dakota Planning Area). PHMA and GHMA are defined as follows:

- PHMA (127,700 acres)—BLM-administered areas with limited impacts containing substantial and high-quality GRSG habitat that support sustainable GRSG populations. These areas were previously labeled Protection Priority Areas (PPA) in the Draft SD RMP/EIS. PHMA that were identified in the Proposed Action are the same areas identified by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) as Sage-Grouse Core Areas in their State Sage-Grouse Plan (SDGFP 2014).⁴ Areas of PHMA largely coincide with areas identified as Priority Areas for Conservation in the COT report.
- GHMA (23,700 acres)—BLM-administered areas with or without ongoing or imminent impacts containing GRSG habitat outside the priority areas. Areas are delineated based on GRSG habitat. These

areas were formerly labeled General Habitat (GH) in the Draft South Dakota RMP/EIS.

The planning area includes other BLM-administered lands that are not habitat for GRSG. These lands would be managed with a balanced approach that would allow for resource use while conserving important resource values as described in the Proposed Plan (Alternative D) in Chapter 2.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this RMP revision project is to ensure that public lands are managed according to the principles of multiple-use identified in FLPMA while maintaining valid existing rights and other obligations already established. The new RMP will address changing needs of the planning area and create a management strategy that best achieves a combination of the planning issues within the framework of the planning criteria.

Table ES-1
Habitat Management Areas in the South Dakota Planning Area

Habitat Management Area	Acres of BLM-Administered Lands	Percent of BLM-Administered Lands in Planning Area
PHMA	127,700	47
GHMA	23,700	9
Other BLM-administered lands (outside of GRSG habitat)	121,600	45

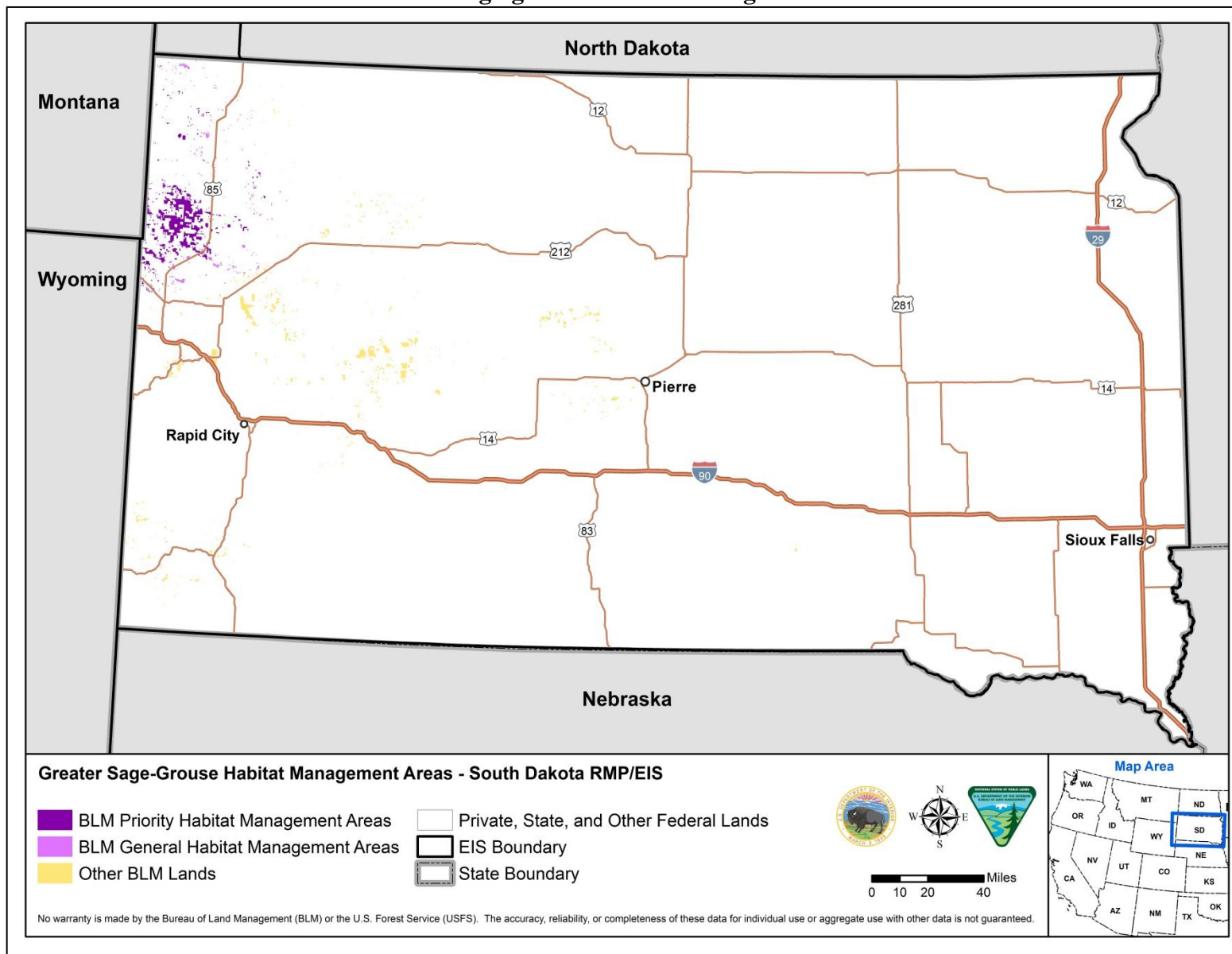
The purpose of this RMP is to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of public lands and minerals administered by the SDFO. The RMP provides goals, objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions and to provide for the long-term benefits to the public, including economic needs of local communities. This is done in coordination with federal, tribal, state, and local governments, land users, and the interested public. This RMP revision will also incorporate appropriate management actions and practices to conserve GRSG and its habitats on BLM-administered land.

The need for the revision is the result of considerable changes within the planning area since completion of the South Dakota RMP in 1985, including:

- Changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions
- New laws, regulations, and policies that invalidate or supersede previous decisions
- Changing user demands and activities, including increased demand for recreational use of public lands, renewable energy, and oil and gas exploration and development
- Increased conflicts between land use and wildlife/wildlife habitat
- Heightened public awareness and interest in BLM management actions and permitted uses

This RMP is needed to respond to the USFWS's March 2010 "warranted, but precluded" ESA listing petition decision (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant factor in its finding on the petition to list the GRSG. In its listing decision, the USFWS noted that changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of GRSG populations. Changes in land allocations and conservation measures in BLM RMPs provide a means to implement regulatory mechanisms to address the inadequacy identified by the USFWS.

Figure ES-2
Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Areas



Proposed Action

The proposed federal action is the Proposed Plan, which identifies resource management actions in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained yield mandates of FLPMA. The proposed action is also intended to provide a consistent framework for managing GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered land. The alternatives, including the Proposed Plan, comprise desired future outcomes and a range of management actions, allowable uses, and land use allocations that guide management on BLM-administered lands. The Proposed Plan, represents the agencies' approach for addressing the purpose and need.

Development of the RMP/EIS

Scoping

A Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the *Federal Register* on July 19, 2007, formally announced the BLM's intent to revise the existing plans and prepare the associated EIS. Publication of the NOI initiated the scoping process and invited affected and interested agencies, organizations, and the general public to participate in determining the scope and issues to be addressed by alternatives and analyses in the EIS. The BLM held nine public scoping meetings between August 14 and October 9, 2007. The nine scoping meetings provided the public with an opportunity to learn and ask questions about the project and the planning process and to submit their issues and concerns to the BLM. The BLM collected comments from the public during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period.

The final Scoping Summary Report, available online at: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html> was prepared in conjunction with all the GRSG LUP amendments, summarizes the scoping and issue-identification process and describes 13 broad issue categories identified during the scoping process.

Cooperating Agency Collaboration

The BLM invited local, state, federal, and tribal representatives to participate as cooperating agencies on the South Dakota RMP/EIS. The BLM invited these entities to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or because they could offer special expertise. Butte, Custer, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, and Pennington County Commissions and the State of South Dakota agreed to participate as cooperating agencies in the RMP revision. The BLM and cooperating agencies participated in nine workshops between August 2008 and January 2013 to formulate alternatives and held three additional meetings to keep cooperating agencies informed and to solicit their input. The USFWS and Forest Service are cooperators for the larger GRSG planning effort, which includes the SD RMP. The MOU between the BLM, USFWS, and Forest Service was signed on March 2012.

The BLM also invited Native American tribes to be cooperating agencies as part of the RMP revision and conducted ongoing coordination including letters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. The BLM sent tribal consultation letters to update cooperators and tribes on the status of the RMP revision process. In addition, during the Draft RMP planning or during the comment period for the Draft RMP and EIS, the SDFO met with and provided a presentation and briefing about the Draft RMP and EIS to representatives of the following tribes:

- Pine Ridge Sioux
- Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara)
- Crow Creek Sioux
- Rosebud Sioux
- Standing Rock Sioux
- Cheyenne River Sioux
- Santee Sioux
- Lower Brule Sioux
- Northern Cheyenne
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux

Development of the Draft RMP/EIS

Development of Management Alternatives

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations (40 CFR, Part 1500), the planning team considered public input and developed a reasonable range of alternatives for the Draft RMP/EIS.

The planning team developed four unique alternatives, including one No Action Alternative and three action alternatives, which were subsequently analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. Each of the preliminary action alternatives was designed to:

- Address the nine planning issues
- Fulfill the purpose and need for the RMP
- Meet the multiple use and sustained yield mandate of the FLPMA
- Respond to USFWS-identified issues and threats to GRSG and its habitat, including specific threats identified in the COT report

Collectively, the three action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D) analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS offered a range of possible management approaches for responding to the purpose and need as well as the planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping. While the overarching goal of the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions, which if selected as the final plan, would constitute a unique RMP.

Publication of Draft RMP/EIS

Public Comment Period

The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the South Dakota Draft RMP and Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on June 14, 2013, initiating the 90-day public comment period. The BLM held five public meetings, in Belle Fourche, Buffalo, Sturgis, Rapid City, and Pierre, South Dakota. Written public comments were reviewed and considered by the BLM (refer to Chapter 5 for additional details).

Comment Analysis

During the public comment periods, the BLM received 48 comment letters by mail, e-mail, and submissions at the public meetings, for a total of 322 substantive comments. Comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns. Upon receipt, the BLM reviewed the comments, grouped similar substantive comments under an appropriate topic heading, and evaluated and wrote summary responses addressing the comment topics. The response indicated whether the commenters' points would result in new information or changes being included in the Final RMP/EIS. In many circumstances, public comments prompted such changes to the Draft RMP/EIS. Appendix W: Public Comments and Responses to Draft SD RMP/EIS, provides a detailed description of the comment analysis methodology and an overview of the public comments received.

RMP/EIS Alternatives and Environmental Effects

Management Actions Common to Alternatives B, C, and D (Proposed Plan)

At a minimum, travel management areas will include the Center of the Nation, Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC, and Exemption Area. Motorized travel will be limited to existing roads and trails. Cross-country travel with snowmobiles and vehicles specifically equipped to travel on snow will be allowed, except in the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC and portions of the Exemption Area. Travel management plans will be completed at the implementation (project) level after the RMP/EIS planning process is complete.

The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC will be designated a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA).

Approximately 86,578 of public land will be available for disposal pending site-specific environmental review.

Land ownership adjustment criteria are described in detail in the Summary Comparison of Alternatives.

The Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACEC will continue to be managed as ACECs. The acres managed within these ACEC would vary slightly by alternative.

Alternative A

Alternative A (Current Management) would continue present management on the BLM-administered surface and mineral estate within the planning area and provides baseline information from which to identify potential environmental consequences when compared to the other alternatives. Alternative A would continue to balance resource protection and use but would provide less specific direction and fewer protective management actions compared to Alternatives B, C, and D (the Preferred Alternative).

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative A places the fewest constraints on resource uses. Alternative A would provide very limited direction for management of rights-of-way (ROWs) and renewable energy development throughout the planning area. In Alternative A, No Surface Occupancy (NSO), Controlled Surface Use (CSU), and timing limitations would apply to oil and gas activities only. In many cases, resource protection would be limited to standard oil and gas stipulations to protect sensitive and high value resources. The specific areas and amount of acres affected by closure or recommended withdrawal of minerals for all alternatives are shown in Chapter 2. The BLM would continue with the present National Register of Historic Places District Boundary for portions of the Fort Meade ACEC. Motorized cross-country travel to retrieve big game animals would be prohibited. Cross-county travel would be allowed within 300 feet of roads to access campsites. Nearly all BLM-administered lands would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas.

Under Alternative A, there would be no change in management of GRSG habitat. Under Alternative A, protection for GRSG would be limited to a 0.25 mile buffer from leks where there would be an NSO stipulation for fluid minerals and a two-mile CSU stipulation for oil and gas activities.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes conservation of physical, biological, heritage and visual resources, and lands with wilderness characteristics with constraints on resource uses. Compared to current management, Alternative B conserves larger areas of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources and places some additional restrictions on motorized vehicle use and mineral development. Alternative B retains the current ACEC, National Backcountry Byway. Alternative B would propose a land transfer for the Fort Meade ACEC, which would reduce the size of the ACEC. The BLM would complete a formal nomination of Fort Meade as a National Historic Landmark in the National Register. The BLM would designate 11,800 acres as SRMAs and maintain 272,000 acres as open to livestock grazing. This alternative would maintain contiguous blocks of vegetation and habitat on BLM-administered lands.

Restrictions on surface-disturbing and disruptive activities in sensitive wildlife habitats would generally be more prohibitive under Alternative B than Alternative A and the size of protective buffers (e.g., for ROWs) would increase around areas of specific management concern such as occupied GRSG leks, big game/GRSG wintering areas, and sharp-tailed grouse leks.

Alternative B would provide GRSG PHMA and GHMA to manage GRSG habitat. PHMA would have NSO restrictions and would be avoidance areas for ROWs (83,700 surface acres, 253,400 subsurface acres).

Alternative C

Alternative C would provide the highest level of resource protection and would place the most constraints on resource uses. Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative C conserves the greatest amount of land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources, designates PHMA as an ACEC, and is the most restrictive to ROW and mineral development. The BLM would not allow prescribed fire under Alternative C. Grazing use allocations would be the same as Alternative A; however, no new grazing allotments or expansion of existing allotments would be allowed in the exemption area. The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC would be designated a SRMA and the District Boundary for the Fort Meade District National Register of Historic Places nomination would be expanded to include the entire Fort Meade military reservation (6,600 acres).

Alternative C would provide the greatest protection of GRSG and its habitat through the establishment of an

ACEC for PHMA and through limitations on surface-disturbing activities. Under this alternative, PHMA would be recommended to be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry, closed to fluid mineral development and exploration, unsuitable for coal leasing, and closed to coal exploration, mineral material sales, and nonenergy leasable minerals development and exploration. PHMA would also be managed as ROW exclusion for all types of ROWs.

Alternative D (Proposed Plan)

Alternative D, the proposed plan, would provide an intermediate degree of restriction compared to the other action alternatives (B and C), while providing more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses compared to Alternative A. Alternative D would designate the largest area of PHMA and would manage those areas for a desired future condition of 70 percent or more of lands capable of producing sagebrush, with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover. Alternative D would emphasize moderate constraints on resource uses, including NSO stipulations on fluid minerals, ROW avoidance areas (e.g., in PHMA and GHMA) for major ROWs with more restrictive exclusion areas in ACECs. Renewable energy ROW exclusion areas would apply in PHMA and other sensitive habitat areas, with exceptions. Alternative D would propose a land transfer for the Fort Meade ACEC. Pending project level environmental review, this transfer would reduce the size of the Fort Meade ACEC by 100 to 170 acres. The current National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Fort Meade Historic District of 6,600 acres would be revised to incorporate all acres inside the original military reservation that are administered by the BLM (3,400 acres). The Fort Meade ACEC and exemption area would be designated as SRMAs (11,700 total acres). Livestock grazing management would separate domestic sheep and goat grazing activities from bighorn sheep range; no new grazing allotments or expansion of existing allotments would be allowed in the Exemption Area if capability criteria are met for 50 percent of the area.

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative D would apply more specific management in PHMA and GHMA to conserve GRSG habitat, while balancing the long-term demand for resource uses throughout the planning area. Surface-disturbing activities, such as ROW and mineral development, in PHMA would be prohibited or limited so as to prevent disruption of GRSG or its habitat.

Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan and Environmental Effects

In consideration of public comments, best science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM refined Alternative D to be the Proposed Plan for Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management (the Proposed Plan). The Proposed Plan represents the BLM's proposed approach for meeting the purpose and need consistent with the agencies' legal and policy mandates.

The BLM Proposed Plan addresses USFWS-identified threats to GRSG and its habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision that apply to the South Dakota planning area as well as threats described in the COT report. The Proposed Plan seeks to provide greater regulatory certainty for management actions intended to conserve the GRSG (Table ES-2, Key Components of the South Dakota Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats). In making its determination of whether the GRSG is warranted to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, the USFWS will evaluate the degree to which land use planning decisions proposed in this RMP/EIS address threats to GRSG and its habitat. The Proposed Plan benefits GRSG populations by eliminating disturbance near leks and other key areas.

The Proposed Plan provides consistent GRSG habitat management across the range, prioritizes development outside GRSG habitat, and focuses on a landscape-scale approach to GRSG habitat conservation. The Proposed Plan would reduce habitat disturbance and fragmentation through limitations on surface-disturbing activities, while addressing changes in resource condition and use through monitoring and adaptive management.

The Proposed Plan complements the State of South Dakota's Sage-Grouse Management Plan by establishing conservation measures to minimize habitat loss, particularly as a result of surface disturbance from energy exploration and development.

For a full description of the Proposed Plan, see Chapter 2.

Table ES-2
Key Components of the South Dakota Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the South Dakota Proposed Plan
All threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Adaptive Management Plan, which allows for more restrictive land use allocations and management actions to be implemented if habitat or population hard triggers are met. • Require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to GRSG. • Monitor implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures in GRSG habitats according to the Habitat Assessment Framework. • Apply buffers necessary based on project type and location to address impacts on leks when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Apply Required Design Features (RDF) when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Prioritize the leasing and development of fluid mineral resources outside GRSG habitat.
All development threats, including mining, infrastructure, and energy development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Implement an anthropogenic disturbance cap of 3% at the Biologically Significant Unit and project area scale. • PHMA: Implement a density cap of an average of 1 energy and mining facility per 640 acres. • GHMA: Limits on surface-disturbing and disruptive activities 0.6 mile from leks and in winter range in GHMA.
Energy Development—fluid minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to NSO stipulation without waiver or modification, and with limited exception. • GHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to NSO stipulation within 0.6 miles of an occupied lek. Open with CSU stipulation within two miles of leks. Winter range in GHMA would be open subject to NSO stipulation.
Energy Development—wind energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Exclusion area for wind energy (not available for wind energy development under any conditions) • GHMA: Exclusion area within one mile of leks. Other portions of GHMA would be an avoidance area. Exclusion areas one mile from leks and avoidance in other parts of GHMA. Winter range in GHMA would be exclusion areas.
Energy Development—solar energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions) • GHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions)

Table ES-2
Key Components of the South Dakota Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the South Dakota Proposed Plan
Infrastructure—major ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROW development with special stipulations). • GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations).
Infrastructure—minor ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROW development with special conditions). • GHMA: Avoidance within two miles of leks. Winter range would be avoidance areas (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations).
Mining—locatable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply RDFs to locatable minerals consistent with applicable law.
Mining—salable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Closed area (not available for salable minerals) with a limited exception (may remain open to free use permits and expansion of existing active pits if criteria are met)
Mining—coal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA is essential habitat for GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR, Part 3461.5(o)(1).
Livestock grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the review and processing of grazing permits/leases in PHMA. • The NEPA analysis for renewals and modifications of grazing permits/leases will include specific management thresholds, based on the GRSG Habitat Objectives Table, Land Health Standards and ecological site potential, to allow adjustments to grazing that have already been subjected to NEPA analysis. • Prioritize field checks in PHMA to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits.
Free roaming equid management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable. Not present in the planning area.
Range management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow range improvements which do not impact GRSG, or which provide a conservation benefit to GRSG such as fences for protecting important seasonal habitats.
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Do not construct new recreation facilities. • Deny special recreation permits that would adversely impact GRSG or its habitat.
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Prioritize aggressive suppression techniques immediately after life and property to conserve the habitat. • GHMA: Within 3 miles of leks, prioritize aggressive suppression techniques immediately after life and property to conserve the habitat.
Nonnative, invasive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat sites in PHMA and GHMA that contain invasive species

Table ES-2
Key Components of the South Dakota Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the South Dakota Proposed Plan
plants species	infestations through an integrated pest management approach.
Sagebrush removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover. • All BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions regarding the actions needed to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives for GRSG. Provides limits on surface-disturbing activities in PHMA.
Pinyon and/or juniper expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable. Not present in the planning area.
Agricultural conversion and exurban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRSG habitat will be retained in federal management.

Summary

Since the release of the Draft South Dakota RMP/EIS, the BLM has continued to work closely with a broad range of governmental partners, including the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USFWS and USGS under the DOI, Indian tribes, governors, state agencies and county commissioners. Through this cooperation, the BLM has developed the Proposed Plan that, in accordance with applicable law, achieves the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

Conservation of the GRSG is a large scale challenge that requires a landscape- scale solution that spans 11 western states. The South Dakota RMP/EIS achieves the consistent, range-wide conservation objectives as outlined below. Additionally, this Proposed RMP/EIS aligns with the State of South Dakota's priorities and land management approaches consistent with conservation of GRSG.

Minimize additional surface disturbance. The most effective way to conserve GRSG is to protect existing, intact habitat. The BLM aims to reduce habitat fragmentation and protect key habitat areas. The South Dakota RMP/EIS minimizes surface disturbance on approximately 274,000 acres of BLM- administered lands by allocating lands as PHMA and GHMA with decisions that aim to conserve GRSG habitat.

The limitations on mineral and ROW development, along with the disturbance cap, lek buffers, and adaptive management, would result in a net conservation gain for GRSG. The Proposed Plan prioritizes oil and gas development outside of GRSG habitat and focuses on a landscape-scale approach to conserving GRSG habitat. In the context of the planning area, land use allocations under the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbances in PHMA, while minimizing disturbance in GHMA.

Improve habitat condition. While restoring lost sagebrush habitat can be very difficult in the short term, particularly in the most arid areas, it is often possible to enhance habitat quality through purposeful management. The South Dakota RMP/EIS commits to management actions necessary to achieve science- based vegetation and GRSG habitat management objectives established in the Proposed Plan.

Vegetation management actions would prioritize PHMA. As a result, the management of vegetation actions would focus on the enhancement of GRSG and its habitat.

Reduce threat of rangeland fire to GRSG and sagebrush habitat Rangeland fire can destroy sagebrush habitat and lead to the conversion of previously healthy habitat into landscapes dominated by invasive species. The South Dakota RMP/EIS incorporates Secretarial Order 3336 and sets forth protocols to improve the BLM's ability to protect GRSG habitat from damaging wildfire. Prescribed fire would only be used to improve or maintain habitat for GRSG and would be only be used to meet specific fuels objective standards.

Citations:

- 1 BLM (US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management). 2011. Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National. Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy. Washington, DC. December 27, 2011.
- 2 USFWS (US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2013. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. USFWS, Denver, Colorado. February 2013.
- 3 The Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force works to identify and implement high priority conservation actions and integrate ongoing actions necessary to preclude the need for the GRSG to be listed under the ESA. The Task Force includes designees from the 11 western states where GRSG is found as well as representatives from USFWS, BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, United States Geological Survey, and Department of the Interior.
- 4 SDGFP. 2014. Greater Sage-Grouse Management Plan South Dakota 2008-2017. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, Pierre.